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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

**Wildlife, Fish, and
Rare Plants Staff**

Washington, DC

February 1998

FS–577

Tracking NatureWatch Successes

National NatureWatch Partners

American Association of Botantical Gardens and Arboretums

American Birding Association

American Fisheries Society

Bat Conservation International

Boone and Crockett Club

Bureau of Land Management

Center for Plant Conservation

Center for Wildlife Information

Defenders of Wildlife

Ducks Unlimited

Eastman Kodak Company

Izaak Walton League

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

National Forest Foundation

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Trout Unlimited

Wildlife Forever

Cover Photos (clockwise from left)

The beauty of nature comes in all sizes—elk viewing in Wyoming. *Photo by Danny On*

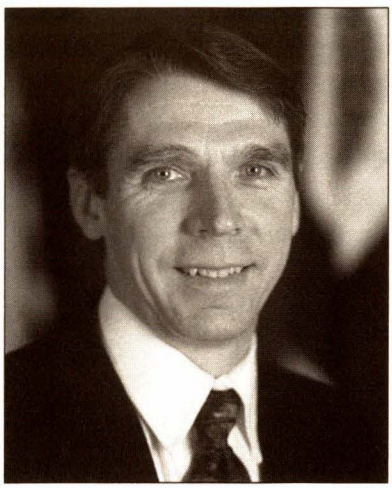
You can see fish so much better with the right kind of eyewear. *Photo by Kimberly Anderson*

Nature viewing is enjoyed equally by men and women. *Photo by Kimberly Anderson*

Exploring the wonder of wildflowers through art is a good way to connect kids to nature. *Photo by Kimberly Anderson*

On the Right Track

A Message From Mike Dombeck, Chief of the Forest Service



USDA Forest Service

To early settlers, it must have once seemed that our vast system of public lands was an infinite and inexhaustible resource. Today, we recognize that the 191 million acres, 128,000 miles of waterways, and nearly 2 million acres of lakes represent ecosystems that are vulnerable to harm if we are not careful stewards. We appreciate, too, that our national forests represent the largest public outdoor classroom in the United States. Where better can people appreciate the wealth, diversity, and sheer beauty of America?

NatureWatch is a vital Forest Service conservation education program that offers people the tools they need to explore, appreciate, and ultimately to conserve our great outdoor classroom. When people return from one of our 820 NatureWatch viewing areas to their homes, schools, and communities, they take a part of the natural world with them. NatureWatch brings people together—anglers, loggers, campers, families, and others—in shared wonder of the fish, wildlife, and plants that dwell on our national forests. From this point of common ground, we can ensure a future for our children, who will know healthy ecosystems and understand what it takes to live within the limits of the land.

There's something else going on with NatureWatch. Conservation education based on viewing nature crosses over to direct economic benefits for many communities. Let's look at birdwatching alone. Active birders spend between $1,800 to $4,000 annually on birding travel and equipment. In 1996, the 32 birding festivals held across the United States attracted 260,000 participants. The Forest Service NatureWatch program plays a partnership role in many

such festivals. Each one makes a substantial economic difference for communities large or small. For example, the annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival generates more than $45,000 in revenue for the 3,000 residents of Cordova, Alaska. When you consider that birdwatching has increased 155 percent from the early 1980's to the 1990's, investing in birdwatching ecotourism looks like a wise choice.

Healthy economies and healthy ecosystems go hand in hand. As we track the successes of NatureWatch into the 21st century, I urge all participants to be open to creative partnerships that enlarge the fold of NatureWatch viewers and programs. The establishment of the San Sophia NatureWatch Park at the top of the Telluride Ski Area is one such example. Now, the ski area, Telluride, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Forest Service together can offer year-round NatureWatch education and enjoyment to thousands of people.

A few years ago, the Forest Service merged three viewing programs—Eyes on Wildlife, FishWatch, and Celebrating Wildflowers—into NatureWatch. Today, we are entering a period of converging all programs under the umbrella of what I call *collaborative stewardship*, a commitment to healthy ecosystems and working with people on the land. NatureWatch will play an increasingly significant role in achieving my utmost goal for our irreplaceable national forests and grasslands—to protect and restore the health of the land.

Mike Dombeck

Chief, Forest Service

NatureWatch in Action

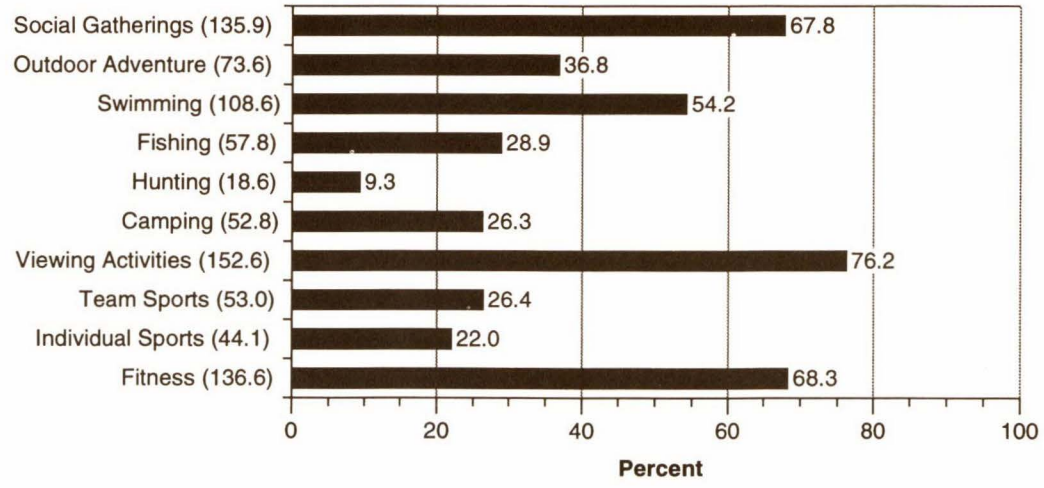
NatureWatch taps into the fastest-growing form of wildlife-related recreation in the United States: watching fish, wildlife, and plants. Viewing sites, brochures, naturalist walks, education activities, viewing blinds, boardwalks, interpretive displays, and festivals offer tools to help discover the natural world. In 1996 alone, more than 7.1 million children and adults participated in Forest Service NatureWatch related activities and programs. By 2040, nature viewing will increase by 150 percent on national forests and grasslands, up from 33 million visitor days annually.

NatureWatch is a cooperative effort of the Forest Service and many partners that offers nature viewing opportunities for the public, encourages safe and sound viewing ethics, and contributes to local economies. We have built a program that spans three focus areas: Eyes on Wildlife, FishWatch, and Celebrating Wildflowers.

Our Forest Service national coordinator, Kimberly Anderson, ensures that NatureWatch thrives across the National Forest System. She furnishes materials, offers training and direction to the field, and nurtures new

Number (millions) and percent of U.S. population 16 years and older participating in outdoor recreation by activity, 1994–95

Nature viewing is enjoyed by more of the U.S. population than any other outdoor recreation activity



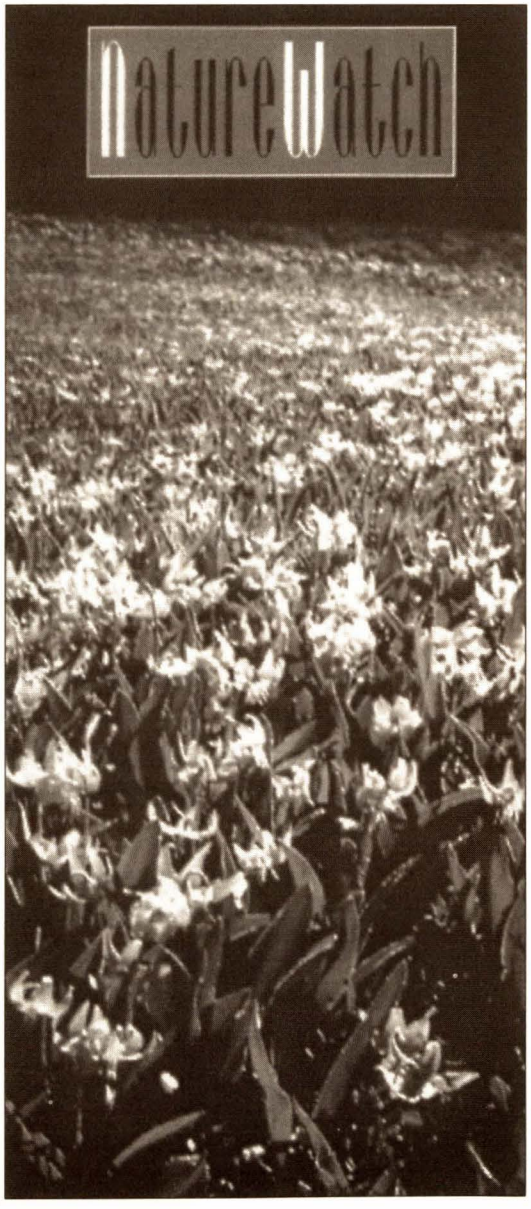
Source: NSRE Report, 1997

partnerships. Our viewing sites alone now tally to more than 820.

People want a window into the national forests, a way to learn about the life that sways, scurries, swims, and soars there. We opened such a window in 1989 with Eyes on Wildlife. That window just keeps opening wider. We've worked to create a feast for the senses, an effortless education, and a way for people to become partners in habitat conservation.

The new NatureWatch national brochure features 17 of our partners:

- American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums
- American Fisheries Society
- Bat Conservation International
- Boone and Crockett Club, Center for Plant Conservation
- Center for Wildlife Information
- Denver Botanical Gardens
- Ducks Unlimited
- Eastman Kodak Company
- The Endangered Species Store
- Flora of North America
- Izaak Walton League
- National Forest Foundation
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Telluride Ski and Golf Co.
- Trout Unlimited
- Wildlife Forever



William Moir

Partnerships

Our NatureWatch Strategy for 1996–2001 clearly states: "Be a leader in cooperative partnerships." Indeed, partnerships are becoming our watchword. At the local level, forests and ranger districts forge alliances with civic clubs, chambers of commerce, local businesses, and conservation groups. At the national level, partnerships function in two main ways. Corporate relationships with companies such as Eastman Kodak lend invaluable resources across the forest system. Our collaborative efforts with agencies and national conservation organizations build a strong NatureWatch network and national pride in the program. To date,

Let's Take a Closer Look at Three of Our Recent National Partnerships

Bat Conservation International
Who would want to watch something as creepy crawly as a bat? "People are starting to recognize bats for the first time as watchable wildlife," asserts Robert Benson, public relations officer for Bat Conservation International (BCI).

NatureWatch helps eliminate bat myths and cultivate appreciation. For example, we worked with BCI to interpret the importance of old, dead trees and artificial roost boxes for bat survival in California's San Bernardino National Forest and Blanchard Springs Caverns in the Ozark National Forest.

The 14,000 BCI members in 75 countries often lead education programs and bat house building projects. That's a terrific resource to share. By teaming up with BCI as well as the Bureau of Land Management, we learn new ways to capture the imagination of wildlife watchers. Think about this BCI convincing bat fact: A single little brown bat can catch 600 mosquitoes in just 1 hour.

Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Forever, a nonprofit conservation organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has chipped in for NatureWatch interpretive signs on more than 100 Forest Service sites in 20 States. Doug Grann, executive director of Wildlife Forever, sees a silver lining for wildlife conservation through NatureWatch.

The Jack Pines Wildlife Viewing Tour in Michigan is a case in point. Once, the local people viewed the attempts to recover the Kirtland's Warbler warily. Today, a wildlife viewing tour resulting from many partners—including Wildlife Forever and the Huron-Manistee National Forest—helps people see the warblers, appreciate the management efforts necessary for their conservation, and add visitor dollars to local businesses.

Telluride Ski and Golf Company
For towns tied to downhill ski recreation, NatureWatch holds promise as one way to extend the thrill of the slopes to every season while promoting appreciation for the landscape's natural value. The Saint Sophia NatureWatch Park now graces the 10,540-foot summit of Colorado's Telluride Ski Resort. Summer nature trails loop through the park. A small environmental center features natural history displays and an interactive information system. More than 300,000 visitors were expected to climb aboard the free gondola each year (900,000 already have).

"This program represents an unprecedented spirit of cooperation between the Forest Service and the ski industry," says Jim Wells, president of Telluride Ski and Golf Company. "This will be the Nation's first NatureWatch Park on a ski mountain. We want people to learn about the environment, understand conservation efforts, and appreciate what nature has to offer."

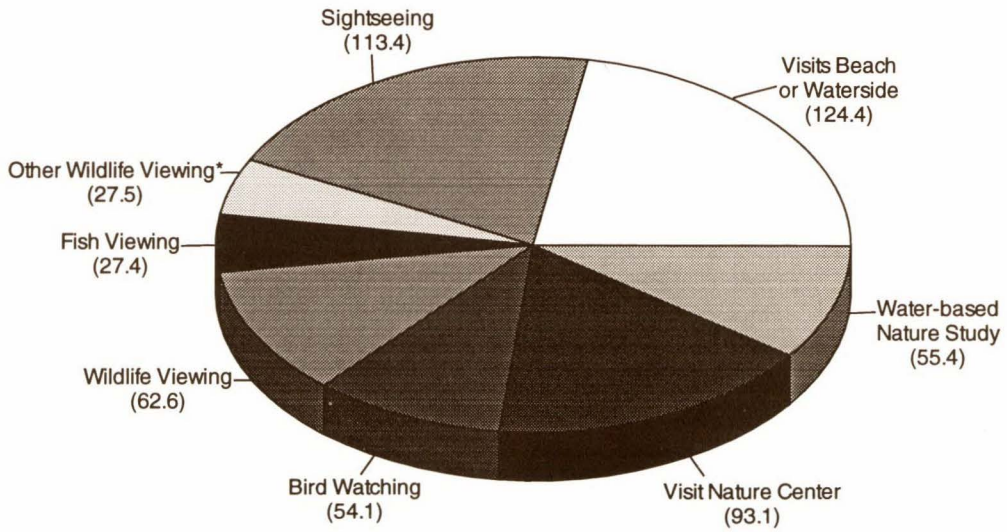
40 State wildlife-viewing guides have been published in partnership with Defenders of Wildlife, Falcon Press, dozens of State fish and wildlife agencies, and other national and local partners. In 1996, partners and the Forest Service matched dollars to leverage more than $3 million in project expenditures and accomplishments.

Skyrocketing National Demand

Wildlife and fish viewing are on a fast track, exceeding growth in both fishing and hunting. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of Americans participating in viewing increased by 63 percent. As Chief Dombeck noted in his opening message, birdwatching jumped by an amazing 155 percent in participation from 1982–83 to 1994–95. Birders now number 54 million. In comparison, golf showed a 29-percent rise with just under 30 million participants.

In 1994, 33.4 million visits were made to the national forests to view fish, wildlife, and plants, with an anticipated 150-percent increase in visits by 2040. Where are people going? Certainly, festivals and events draw large numbers to communities near national forests. For example, the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival in Washington attracts 13,000 visitors. The Kokanee Salmon Education Program at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, reaches 120,000 visitors. More than 100,000 people joined in *Celebrating Wildflowers* walks and talks on national forests since 1992. In 1996, more than 64,000

Percentage of U.S. population 16 years and older participating in viewing activities, 1994–95



*Includes wildlife photography and nature study not related to a specific species.

Source: NSRE Report, 1997

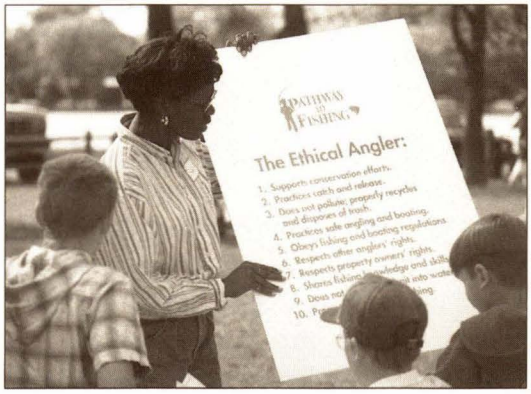
children and adults participated in more than 320 Forest Service sponsored National Fishing Week events. Beyond events are family excursions, trips to some of the 820 wildlife viewing areas, and school programs.

Economic Benefits at All Levels

In 1994, viewers spent more than $18.1 billion nationally, with $1.8 billion tied to national forests. Fish and wildlife viewing, in turn, is providing job opportunities for outfitters and guides, restaurant and hotel operators, and others. We found that in the same year, 55,000 full-time jobs resulted from wildlife and fish viewing on national forests and grasslands. We know that even for a town as small as Cordova, Alaska, with limited accommodations, the annual shorebird festival brings in a critical $47,000 to the community of 3,000 people.

Kimberly Anderson

Nature viewing is enjoyed equally by men and women.



Kimberly Anderson

National fishing week activities focus on habitat and fish health, and fun!

How Do You Recognize a NatureWatch Participant?

One clue could be a pair of binoculars as a permanent appendage. What we do know from surveys is that viewing nature is enjoyed almost equally by men and women. The typical age falls between 25 and 44. More than half of the viewers have education beyond high school. However, outreach programs on national forests strive to reach an ever broader, more culturally diverse audience.

Sustaining Prosperity

A great challenge lies in making sure that we can handle the flood of NatureWatch viewers. That means protecting the resources. One way to do that is to ensure we have the services, education outreach, and facilities to meet needs, while conserving our irreplaceable birds, animals, fish, and plant life.

A 3-in-1 Program: Eyes on Wildlife, FishWatch, Celebrating Wildflowers

It all started in 1989 with Eyes on Wildlife. In 1994, we came up with the term NatureWatch to embrace Eyes on Wildlife, FishWatch, and Celebrating Wildflowers. We recognize that there is no way to draw lines between what swims in rivers, flies from trees, and sprouts from the earth. Thanks to the synergy of partnerships and our field people following their instincts, the program has been a howling success.

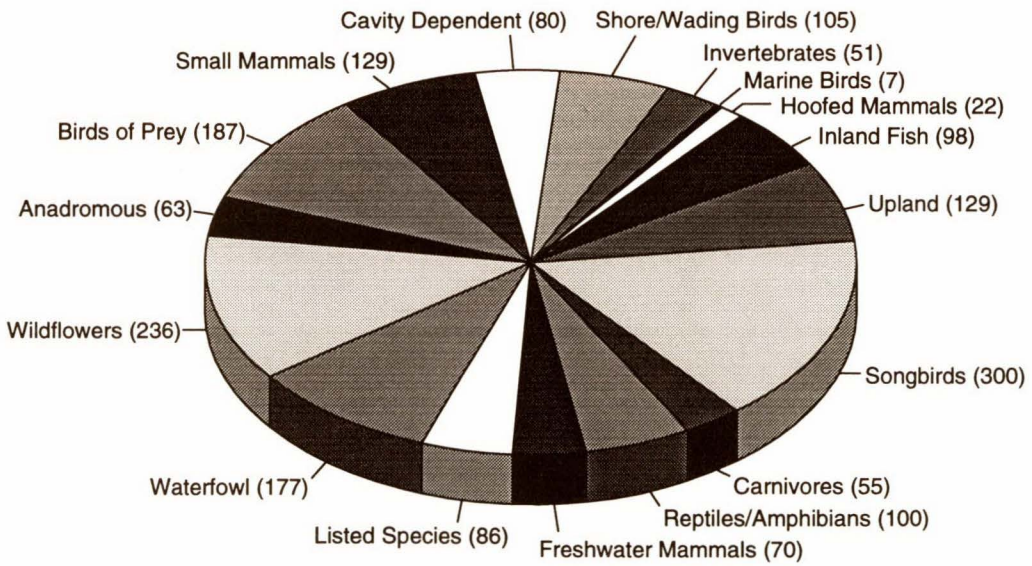
Eyes on Wildlife

Eyes on Wildlife kicked off the watchable wildlife movement within our agency. We signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 1989 to promote watchable wildlife among nine Federal agencies, a coalition of State agencies, and four conservation groups.

We took our role to heart. Take the plethora of State wildlife-viewing guidebooks and designated sites. Upon the signing of the MOU, one viewing guide existed. In 1997, 40 States offer guidebooks and hundreds of viewing areas marked with binocular signs—the most visible way to promote watchable wildlife. We worked in partnership with

Viewing-site featured species, 1995

A viewing site can feature many species



Source: 1995 Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plant Management System

Defenders of Wildlife for the first several years to help develop the viewing network. Twenty-one of the guides reflect Forest Service partnerships.

The Northern Region became our pilot region and Montana's Lolo National Forest a pilot forest. We shared the lead in the first national watchable wildlife conference in 1992, attracting 500 people to Missoula, Montana.

Each year, on the second Saturday in May, we dive into International Migratory Bird Day events. Bird walks, talks, and workshops celebrate the return of birds, alert people to declines in our neotropical species (those that breed in North America and winter in Mexico or points south), and encourage everyone to soar into action to conserve bird habitat. More than 260,000 participants attended 32 birding festivals in the United States in 1996.

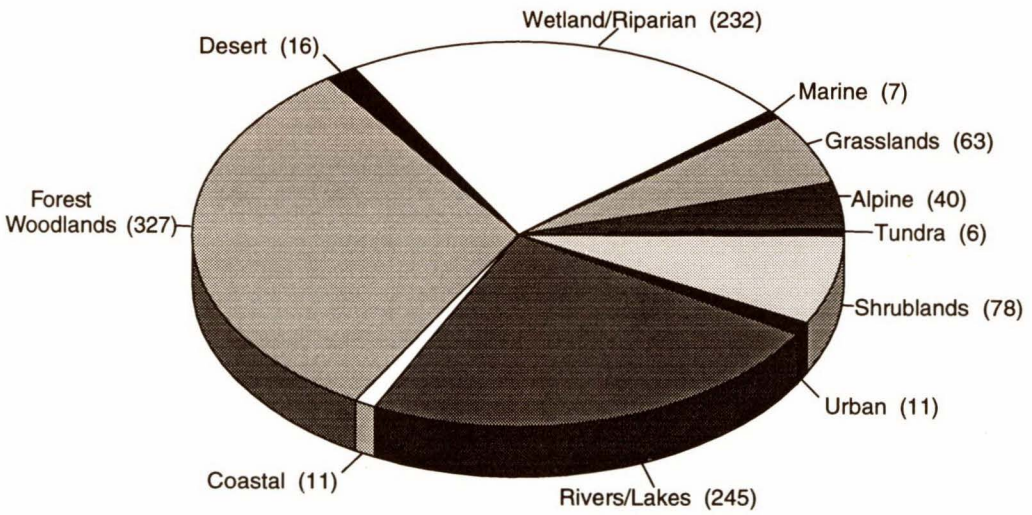
FishWatch

How much of fishing is spent musing upon the riffles of a stream, insects rising, or kingfishers clattering by? We looked at our Rise to the Future fish program and realized that many of those activities are "watchable." In 1996, more than 27.4 million Americans enjoyed fish viewing.

We joined with fish biologists and the Rise to the Future program, helping with National Fishing Day events that

Viewing-site ecosystems, 1995

A viewing site can feature several ecosystems



Source: 1995 Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plant Management System

emphasize the value of aquatic ecosystems. With the help of 2,300 partners, 64,000 children and adults took part in more than 320 Forest Service sponsored National Fishing Week events in 1996.

Beyond fishing days, we have encouraged educational activities surrounding spectacular fish events, such as salmon battling upstream to their spawning grounds. We are involved in the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival in Washington and the Kokanee Salmon Education Program at Lake Tahoe. Those two events alone reach 13,000 and 120,000 visitors, respectively. Finally, we designate fish viewing areas and have even shaped whole nature trails around themes, such as "What makes a blue-ribbon trout stream?"

FishWatch has a serious element beyond its focus on water fun. In the past decade, we have seen a 60-percent increase in the number of North American fish species at risk of extinction. The future of healthy, clean streams, lakes, and rivers is at stake. FishWatch aims to inspire caring and to offer ways for people to make a difference as volunteers and partners and by practicing daily conservation of precious water.

Celebrating Wildflowers

Watching wildflowers has a distinct advantage over fish and wildlife viewing. The plants stay in one place and allow a nose-to-flower experience.

Our agency joins with the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service to promote "Celebrating Wildflowers—National Wildflower Week in May." Each year, our field people lead hundreds of flower walks, offer coloring contests for children, and pass on a message of plant conservation.

Celebrating Wildflowers is a year-round endeavor. Our goal is to share the beauty of America's wildflowers with the public, to increase awareness of this invaluable resource, and to promote conservation by working with corporate, civic, and private partners.

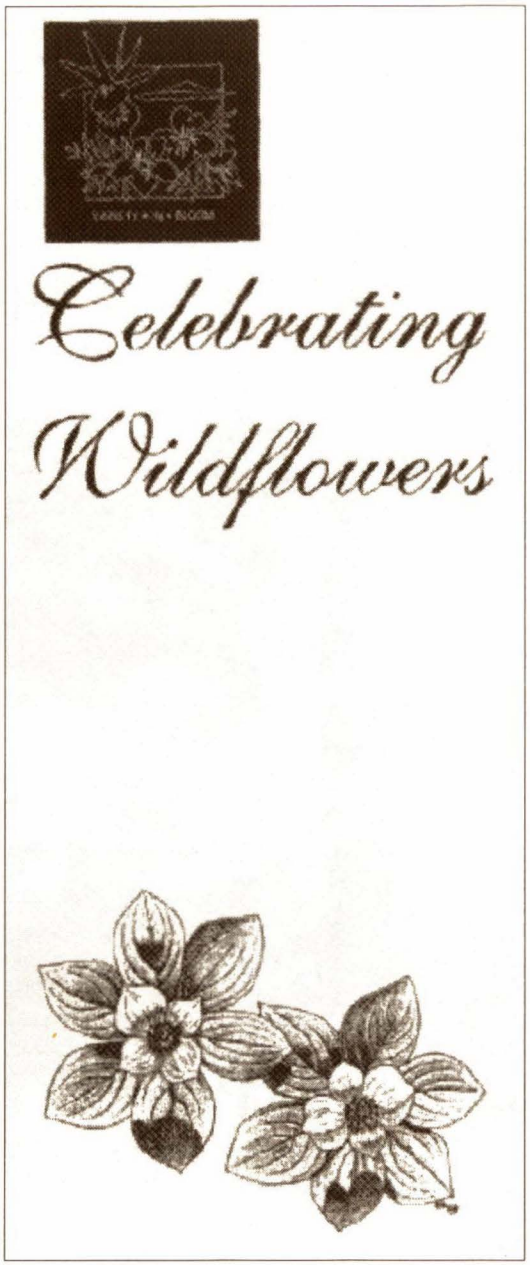
There is always a flower blooming somewhere on a national forest and a multitude of ways to celebrate. We help communities create native plant gardens to attract butterflies, for example. We even sponsor a wildflower hotline number featuring weekly updates on wildflower viewing sites and events from April through July. Try it at 1–800–354–4595! Since 1992, more than 100,000 people have participated

Audrey Nes Kuykendall

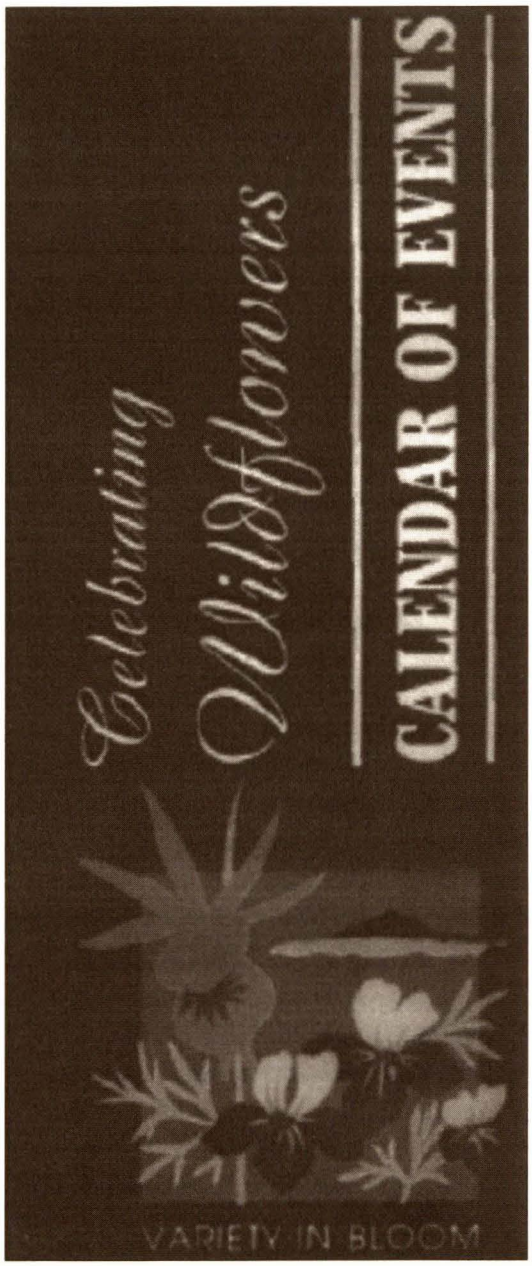
Rocky Mountain Columbine.

in wildflower events sponsored by the Forest Service and partners.

With new national partners like the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums, the Center for Plant Conservation, and the Denver Botanical Gardens, we expect the possibilities to flourish.



1997 "Celebrating Wildflowers" Brochure



1997 "Celebrating Wildflowers" Calendar of Events

Tracking National Successes

Our NatureWatch National Coordinator position dates just to 1995. The list below offers a sampling of the tracks set down by our National Coordinator, Kimberly Anderson.

Kim Berns

Meet Kimberly Anderson, Forest Service NatureWatch National Coordinator based in the Denver Regional office (303-275-5064)

New Materials

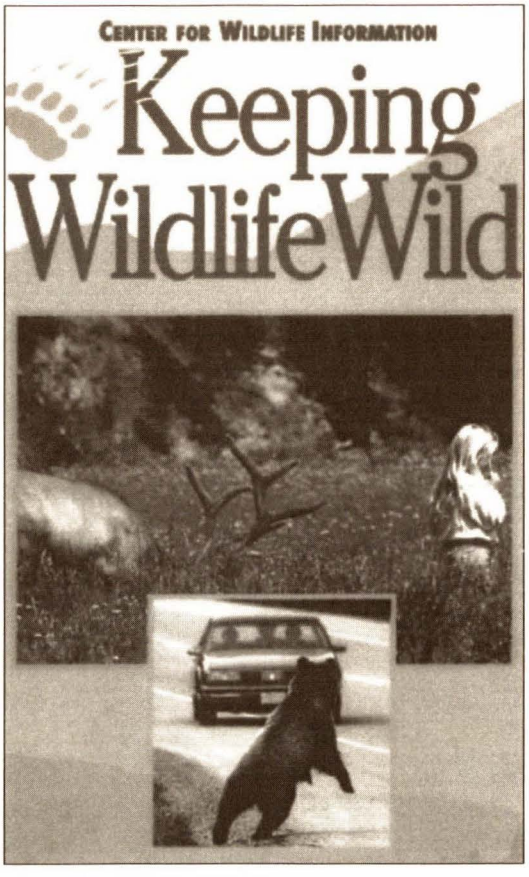
- A NatureWatch brochure and national feature article spell out the goals of NatureWatch and invite people to join in as participants and partners.
- NatureWatch packets brim with viewing guides, brochures, posters, and training tips for newcomers to the program.
- Annual International Migratory Bird Day and Celebrating Wildflowers packets give forests a start-up kit with new themes for the year.
- When the National Geographic Society chose "Geography: Exploring a World of Habitats, Seeing a World of Difference" as its 1996 theme for Geography Awareness Week, we lent a hand as a partner and distributor of education packages.

Training Our Staff

- Maintaining a mailing list of more than 900 employees offers one way to keep people up to speed on new ways of conveying NatureWatch to the public.
- Annual national training sessions in NatureWatch bring creative thinkers together to share ideas for planning viewing sites and events, protecting the resource while encouraging watching, and finding ways to enlist partners.
- A NatureWatch Program Training manual, packet, and slide show allow each Region to offer its own sessions without the high cost of national travel.

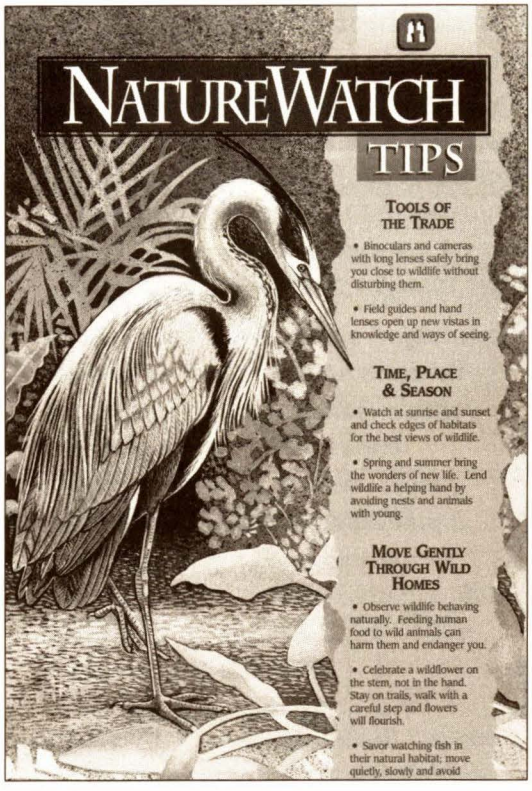
Responsible Viewing Ethics

- A top priority of NatureWatch is to help people discover the natural world without harming wildlife, fish, plants, or themselves. A partnership with the Center for Wildlife Information and the National Forest Foundation produced 500 *Make Room for Wildlife* educational packets for the forests to use in public presentations.



Center for Wildlife Information

"Keeping Wildlife Wild" video is part of the Make Room for Wildlife educational packet.


NATUREWATCH
TIPS
TOOLS OF THE TRADE
• Binoculars and cameras with long lenses safely bring you close to wildlife without disturbing them.
• Field guides and hand lenses open up new vistas in knowledge and ways of seeing.
TIME, PLACE & SEASON
• Watch at sunrise and sunset and check edges of habitats for the best views of wildlife.
• Spring and summer bring the wonders of new life. Lend wildlife a helping hand by avoiding nests and animals with young.
MOVE GENTLY THROUGH WILD HOMES
• Observe wildlife behaving naturally. Feeding human food to wild animals can harm them and endanger you.
• Celebrate a wildflower on the stem, not in the hand. Stay on trails, walk with a careful step and flowers will flourish.
• Savor watching fish in their natural habitat; move quietly, slowly and avoid

National Forest Foundation, Center for Wildlife Information and Forest Service

- The popular NatureWatch Tips poster, developed by the Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation, is spreading beyond our forest trailheads, campground bulletin boards, and viewing sites to schools and other agencies.

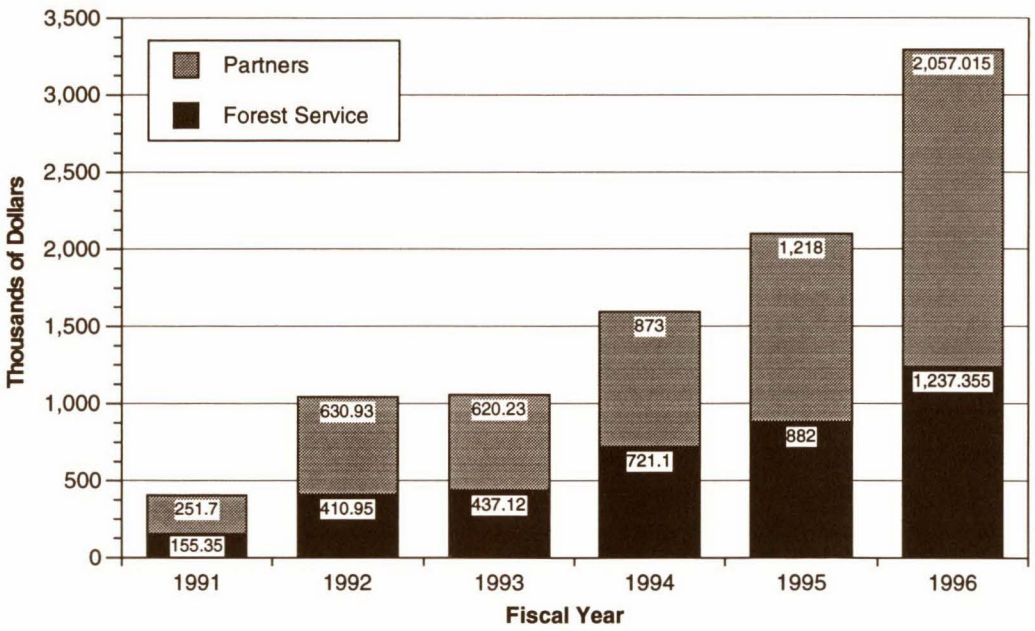
- We strive to impart ethics messages of viewing wildlife from a distance, leaving wildflowers on the stem, and so forth, as an essential component of all our viewing areas, programs, and projects.

Partnerships and Grants

It takes time to build partnerships, yet the effort is paying off with a diversified base that now unites wildlife, fish, and plant groups. We've discovered that the inclusive name NatureWatch helps us attract partners that we would never have thought possible if we were still called Eyes on Wildlife. Funds contributed and leveraged at the national level surpassed $500,000 from 1995 to 1997. If we add up all the partner dollars across hundreds of ranger districts, the figure climbs to several million dollars.

History of Forest Service and partner funding for NatureWatch

Partner contributions have increased almost 100 percent since 1991



Source: 1996 Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plant Management System

Tracking Regional Successes

Northern Region

NatureWatch specialists

An onsite specialist gives the public "live" interpretive contact and keeps the program visible. The Lolo and Idaho National Forests demonstrate the success of such positions:

- **Lolo National Forest, Montana.** Sue Reel and watchable wildlife have become synonymous on Montana's Lolo National Forest, the original pilot Eyes on Wildlife forest.

Sue Reel

Valley of the Moon Nature Trail, Rock Creek, Montana.

A decade's worth of success dazzles throughout the Lolo and in schools, too. Open the new Watershed Trunk and you'll unlatch an entire teaching unit for K–8 students. The Lolo joined the Montana Natural History Center and the Tri-State Implementation Council to create a traveling education trunk focusing on the Clark Fork River Watershed. Whether creating trunks, giving talks and walks, or enhancing a wildlife viewing area, Sue Reel's interpretation reveals nature's complexity at every level, from native plants to grizzly bears.

- **Idaho Panhandle National Forest.** To pool our talents, the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Bureau of Land Management cooperatively support one NatureWatch specialist. You will usually find Beth Paragamian in the middle of a cluster of children who stare wide-eyed at the injured owl perched on her wrist. Or maybe she will be out on the edge of an icy Lake Coeur d'Alene pointing out wintering bald eagles. In an average year, she connects with 4,000 people in rural northern Idaho. Teachers also can check out one of her 10 traveling educational trunks. Permanent displays at visitor centers and viewing areas add another layer to her vibrant program.

Raptor Festival, Gallatin National Forest, Montana

Montana's Bridger Mountain Range ranks as the number one golden eagle flyway in the United States. On a peak October day, watchers may spot 250 of these regal birds of prey. The Bridger Bowl Ski Corporation; HawkWatch International; the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; and Wild Birds Unlimited join the Gallatin National Forest to offer an annual weekend Raptor Festival. Participants hike to the ridgetop to identify eagles and hawks at eye level and attend raptor education workshops in the ski lodge. A year-round interpretive display gives winter skiers a sense of camaraderie with eagles. Skiers ride a chairlift to the summit, while eagles ride the wind for an easier journey south.

USDA Forest Service

Warblers are one of many birds that benefit from the neotropical migratory bird partnership program.

Rocky Mountain Region

Songbird Field Education, White River National Forest, Colorado

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush? In this case, a bird in the hand helps us value songbirds in the wild in an intimate, personal way. In 1996, 600 lucky people over the course of a season joined the Colorado Bird Observatory for a hands-on learning experience in the White River National Forest. Researchers capture birds in mist nets for banding and release. In turn, the onlookers capture a stunning view of these tiny, feathered wonders. Through research, we are gaining a better understanding of populations and habitats; through sharing with wildlife viewers, we gain lifetime allies for bird conservation.

Schoolyard Wild Landscaping, Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, Colorado

Do national watchable wildlife conferences inspire the host communities? In the case of the 1995 event in Estes Park, Colorado, the answer is a resounding yes. Inspired by the workshops, Arapaho-Roosevelt Forest staff and many local partners worked with students and teachers to transform the Estes Park schoolyard into a wildlife refuge. High-school students constructed bat houses. First

graders hung their handmade bird houses. A biology class planted a native garden resistant to drought. Boy scouts planted 50 new trees. The first-aid class watered new planting. Teachers now step just outside the classroom for environmental education. Next step? The school hopes to be designated as a NatureWatch site with their own binocular sign.

Celebrating Wildflowers at Denver Botanic Gardens, Rocky Mountain Region Office, Colorado

Here's an alternative to picking wildflowers: Just make your own. A volunteer demonstrated how to create the State flower, the Colorado columbine, from colored crepe paper as part of a 5-day Celebrating Wildflowers event held at the Denver Botanic Gardens in May 1997. Thanks to a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, the Colorado Native Plant Society, and the Botanic Gardens, 3,500 adults and children got a whiff of the beauty of the State's wildflowers through displays, talks, and take-home wildflower coloring books.

Southwest Region

Wildlife Fair, Tonto National Forest, Arizona

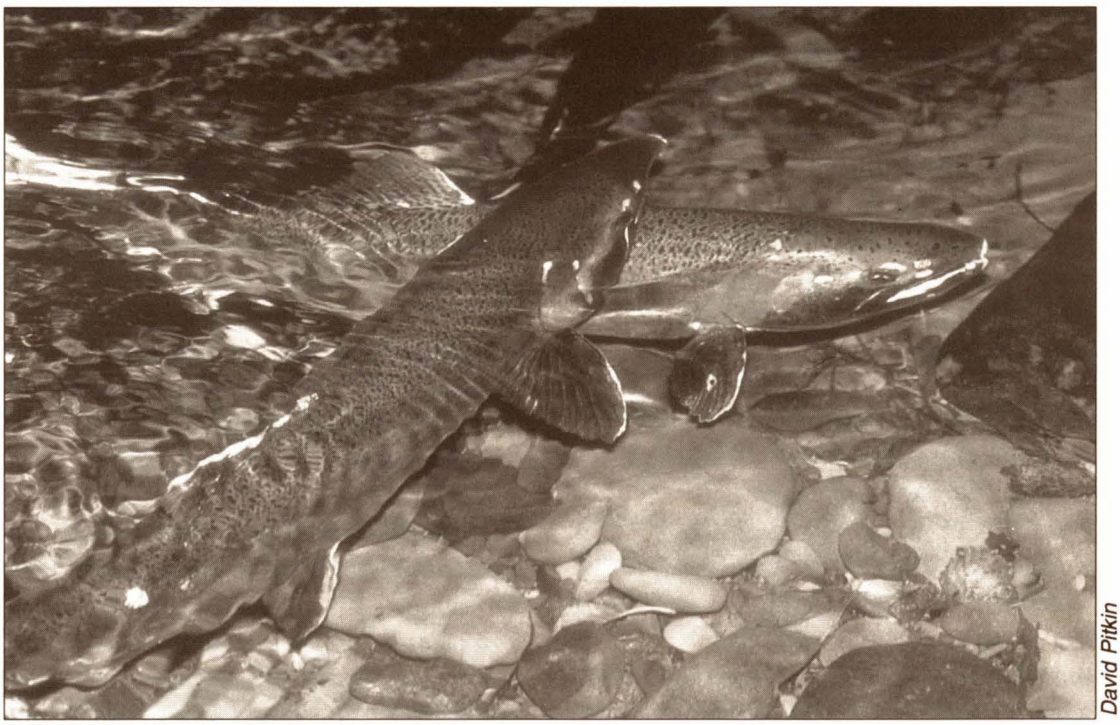
For 2 days each year, the furred, feathered, and scaled invade the Payson Middle School gymnasium in the form of a Wildlife Fair. In 1996, 600 schoolchildren had 1 day of the fair to themselves to touch, feel, hear, and immerse themselves in local wildlife. The second day, 2,000 people joined in to listen to talks and sample the collage of hands-on displays. When they left, their eyes had been opened a little wider to the natural landscape around them. The Mogollon Sporting Association was a primary partner, joined by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State Parks, Ducks Unlimited, the Payson Unified School District, the Payson Wildlife Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

International Migratory Bird Day, Coronado National Forest, Arizona

You do not have to trek to the tropics to find elegant trogans. If you're lucky, you might spot one on a southern Arizona national forest. Newcomers to birding and experts, too, flocked to the Sabino Canyon National Recreation Area, near Tucson, for birding tours and to stop at four information booths showcasing sky island ecosystems, backyard landscaping for birds, elegant trogon research, and neotropical migratory bird conservation. The 1996 commemoration of International Migratory Bird Day attracted 750 visitors, including 25-percent minority visitors (mostly Hispanic). Partners made it all possible: the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists, Tucson Audubon Society, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and a local raptor rehabilitator.

Riparian Habitats Display, Cibola National Forest, New Mexico

The lives of fish, plants, and wildlife intersect at one of the richest natural



David Pitkin

Twenty-seven million people are "lured" to fish viewing activities like those offered in Utah's Strawberry River.

habitats—streamside riparian areas. Here, an interpretive sign features the aquatic secrets of riparian areas. Families enjoying Red Canyon Campground in the Manzano Mountains leave with a wealth of new appreciation and knowledge. Wildlife Forever provided the matching grant. The Cibola sees the sign as a stepping stone for naturalist programs and special activities and curricula for schools.

Intermountain Region

Cutthroat Trout Brochure, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Nevada

A trout out of water has no home. That is a simple message we all know. Now, a brochure featuring the native Lahontan cutthroat trout is just one way agencies and partners hope to let us terrestrial dwellers know that these special trout need our help. The brochure details the trout's natural history, reasons for its decline to threatened species status, and how restoring riparian habitat is one way to help the Lahontans have a fighting chance for survival. The forest created the brochure in concert with the Bureau of Land Management, the Nevada Division of Environmental

Protection, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Trout Unlimited.

Discovery Bird and Fish Watching Trail, Uinta and Wasatch-Cache National Forests, Utah

"It's something you'd see on *National Geographic*," says one visitor watching hundreds of Kokanee salmon spawn in Utah's Strawberry River, a few footsteps away from the viewing trail. At the end of the trail, visitors watch as State employees collect eggs from Bear Lake cutthroat for fish hatcheries around the State. They are also likely to witness research techniques that allow the biologists to keep tabs on the growth and health of the fish coming in from the Strawberry River. The major bellwether of fish health is the condition of riparian areas, which visitors can examine in a set of before and after photographs taken during the process of streamside restoration. The hard work must be paying off, because every year more fish return, and more visitors, too!

Sampling the Food Web, Salmon and Challis National Forests, Idaho

One hundred fourth graders, four teachers, and 10 parents sampled a day in the life of a field biologist, while learning about food webs in a way that no textbook can echo. Scooping aquatic insects in nets, capturing small mammals in live traps, and electroshocking fish (only for a moment) revealed a living web of life that is intricately connected. Idaho Fish and Game chipped in for a successful field learning event that's bound to be repeated.

Pacific Southwest Region

NatureWatch Festivals, Sequoia National Forest, California

Two nature festivals in California's Kern River Valley are changing perceptions about fish, wildlife, and plants from negative to positive. Local communities now reap the harvest of wildlife ecotourism, offsetting their concerns about possible land-management impacts of having local species listed under the Endangered Species Act. More than 1,000 people attended the 2nd Annual Kern Valley Bioregions Festival, April 27–28, 1996, and the 2nd Annual Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival, September 28–29. The largest vulture assembly in North America, at 33,000, is enough to put this valley on any map! Festival partners, uniting wildlife and economic interests, include the California Department of Fish and Game, the Kern River Research Center, the Kern Valley River Research Center, the Kern Valley Revitalization Committee, the Kernville Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Isabella Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Isabella Beautification Committee, The Audubon Society, and The Nature Conservancy.

Birdwatching at Chilao Visitor Center, Angeles National Forest, California

For 3,500 children from Los Angeles, the birdwatching garden at Chilao Visitor's Center is a chance to turn down the city noise and slip into a more

melodious world. Many hard-to-find birds are attracted to the site, thanks to the native vegetation plantings, annual wildflower seedings, and the mineral licks, bird feeders, and bird houses strategically placed around the garden. The sanctuary, with its barrier-free nature trail and wildlife teaching materials, was completed with funds from the Big Anita Canyon Historical Society and the help of volunteers from the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, the Boy Scouts, and local communities.

Taylor Creek Viewing Bridge and Stream Profile Chamber, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California

Visitors come nose-to-nose with aquatic life without disturbing it, thanks to an underground stream profile chamber with a 30-foot window into "Life in the Fast Lane." The salmon viewing bridge, "spawnsored" by the California Tahoe Conservancy and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, allows visitors to watch spawning salmon without eroding the streambanks. The nearby Taylor Creek Meadow Wildlife Viewing Deck offers panoramic views of the meadow, mountain peaks, Lake Tahoe, and a parade of nesting geese, blackbirds, osprey, deer, and other mammals. No wonder 120,000 people stop by each year, including thousands of school children who learn about stream ecology through the Kokanee Salmon Education Program.

Pacific Northwest Region

NatureWatch Specialist, Puget Sound Eyes on Wildlife Program, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Olympic National Forests, Washington

Have you ever peered into a 300-pound bald eagle nest? Seattle area residents can take a peek as part of a new prototype eagle exhibit, just one of a long list of Puget Sound Eyes on Wildlife triumphs. Coordinator Chuck Gibilisco represents two forests, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, two Audubon chapters, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Trout Unlimited. NatureWatch trails, viewing areas, and interpretive panels are cropping up everywhere. Teachers are plunging into Celebrating Wildflowers plant conservation workshops, biodiversity trunks, and wildlife viewing areas accessible to schools. Thousands of busy urban people are pausing to take note of nature.

Wenatchee River Salmon Festival, Wenatchee National Forest, Washington

For 4 days each September, salmon reign supreme in Leavenworth. The Wenatchee River Salmon Festival attracts some 12,000 people annually, including 1,500 school children. Staff from two Ranger Districts of the Wenatchee National Forest roll up their sleeves every year with the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery and a host of community groups to plan the event. For the Yakima Indian Nation and the Colville Confederated Tribes, it's a time to pay respect to the salmon by sharing

THE LADDER OF LIFE
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Wenatchee River
SALMON FESTIVAL
September 18–21, 1997
Leavenworth, Washington at the National Fish Hatchery
Hosted by
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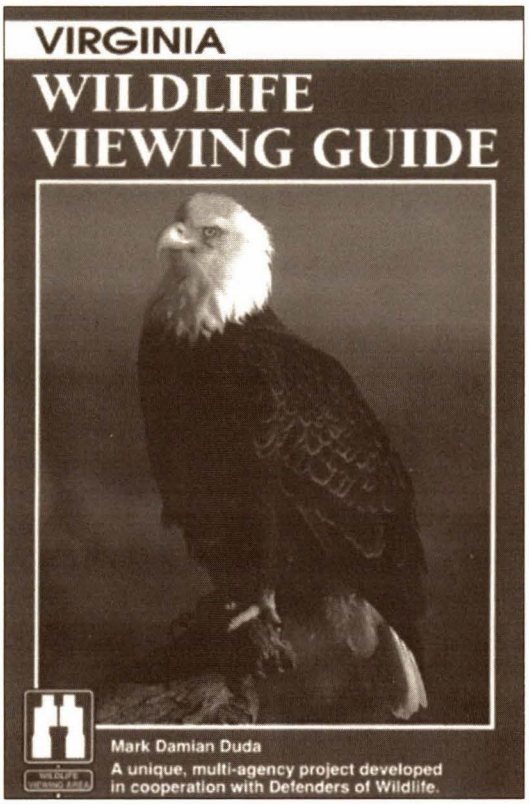
Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery
For more information, contact Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce at 509.548.5807
Visit our web site at: http://www.salmonfest.com
Winner of 1997 poster contest - Alicia Wise, age 8, Kenroy Elementary

Wenatchee River Salmon Poster contest brings out the artistic skills of children. *Designed by Alicia Wise, age 8, Kenroy Elementary*

their cultural traditions. Storytellers weave salmon tales—told inside the tail of a 50-foot-long inflatable fish. Meanwhile, mascots Frank and Frances Fish roam the grounds. Children play the bug game Macroinvertebrate Mayhem. At the heart of the festival is the celebration of the salmon's return from the ocean to a wild river birthplace.

International Migratory Bird Awareness Week, Mount Hood National Forest, Oregon

No binoculars or field guides to watch birds? No problem. Just pick up what you need from a volunteer at the trailhead and join a bird walk. Making birdwatching accessible to everyone was the point of this week-long version of International Migratory Bird Day, held in May 1996 on the Mount Hood National Forest outside Portland. The display area featured low-tech but effective interactive booths and gave local businesses a chance to sell products related to bird conservation. Children played the "passport" game, completing six educational stations, from Kinglet Cafe to Migration Mania. The multipartner event reached thousands of people, including a strong



Booklet © Falcon Press® Publishing Co.

Partnerships are critical to the development of state viewing guides.

turnout from Hispanic populations where the event was strongly promoted. The 1996 flyaway success had planners immediately scheming for 1997.

Southern Region

Conasauga River Snorkeling Trail, Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee

Save that plane fare to Belize! Bring your snorkel down to Conasauga, Tennessee, and swim among 60 colorful and unusual fish species inhabiting the Conasauga State Scenic River. Many are rare or endangered, including the Federally listed blue shiner, amber darter, and Conasauga logperch, as well as the State-listed trispot and coldwater darters. Redeye bass and sunfish linger in deep pools. Alabama hogsuckers, stonerollers, and darters flash through shallow riffles. Forest staff lead snorkel tours and give slide shows that help people identify fish and realize that the clear waters of this river are precious. Partners are Conservation Fisheries, Inc., and the Tennessee Aquarium.

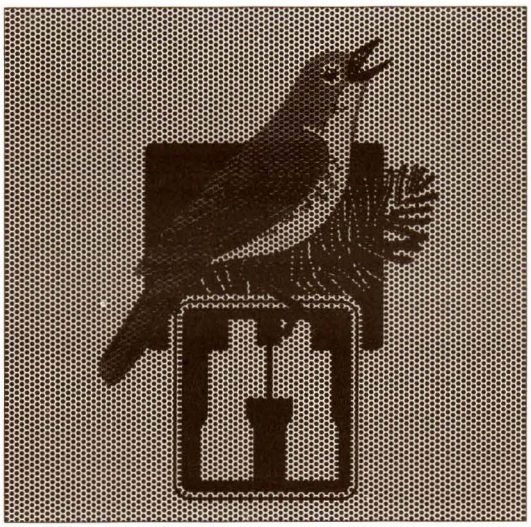
NatureWatch Trail, George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, Virginia

What do you get when you put together a national scenic byway, a busy interstate highway, a national forest, and a very energetic Eagle Scout? A terrific NatureWatch trail sure to catch the attention of motorists. Stephen Collins, an Eagle Scout candidate, took charge of a NatureWatch trail project, using labor from his Boy Scout troop. The trail offers a natural discovery of four of the Wythe Ranger District's major habitat types. Interpretive signs along the way highlight wildlife to watch for in each habitat. An old homesite at the trailhead adds a layer of cultural history, too. The Boy Scouts now lead walking tours for groups, including the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Celebrating Wildflowers by Season, Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina

For an accent on what's green and growing, take a trip to the Cradle of Forestry in Brenard, North Carolina. Plan on at least five visits to catch all

the seasonal shows. Appalachian Spring Celebration in May welcomes the season of rebirth with wildflower walks, photo contests, storytelling, and workshops on medicinal plants and wildlife gardens. Then comes Mothers Day and Trees; Bogs, Bugs and Beavers; Fruit and Fiber Day; and, finally, Forest Festival Day in October. In 1996, the latter attracted 3,000 people who sampled local crafts and explored the natural wealth of wild forests.



Road signs mark the path of the 100-mile Kirtland's warbler audio tour.

Ken Hammond

Wildflower viewing often expands to developing an interest in butterflies, bugs, and hummingbirds.

Eastern Region

Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Michigan

Prescribing fires and timber harvests to save the endangered Kirtland's warbler once ignited controversy in northern Michigan. Today, all that has changed with the success of a 100-mile auto tour. The tour has awakened a fresh awareness of the warbler's plight and habitat restoration. The entire population of Kirtland's warblers—fewer than 1,000—nest in young jack pines on the northern lower peninsula of Michigan and winter in the Bahamas. Restoring Kirtland's warblers requires bringing back the young pines after years of fire suppression. The popular tour has created a recreation opportunity, attracting visitors to linger a few days in hopes of spotting the rare warbler. In a wonderful twist, what

began as a recovery process for an endangered species has turned into a recovery process for the local economy.

Celebrating Wildflowers Across the Eastern Region

If you followed the wildflower bloom in 1997 throughout the Eastern Region, you could also sample a bevy of events. In spring, you'd crouch low to the ground to spot tiny, tough alpine flowers in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest. Slide shows and a fact sheet on alpine plants shore up what you learned on the guided hike. Or you could paddle a canoe in search of aquatic plants found in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest. A NatureWatch walk in Michigan's Ottawa National Forest highlights both feathered and petaled wild inhabitants. Back in the White Mountains in summer, an herbalist leads visitors on a medicinal plant trek. Fall winds up with a Prairie Day held at Missouri's Shaw Arboretum. There, you can relive the feeling of pioneers walking through head-high grasses and wildflowers. From peaks to prairies, Celebrating Wildflowers honors the living gems that color our world.

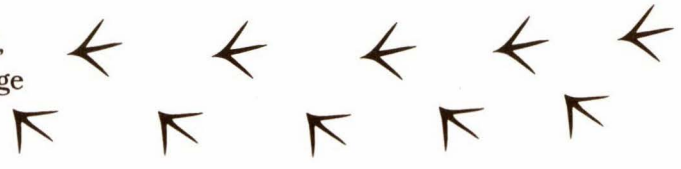
Salmon Watching, Huron-Manistee National Forests, Michigan

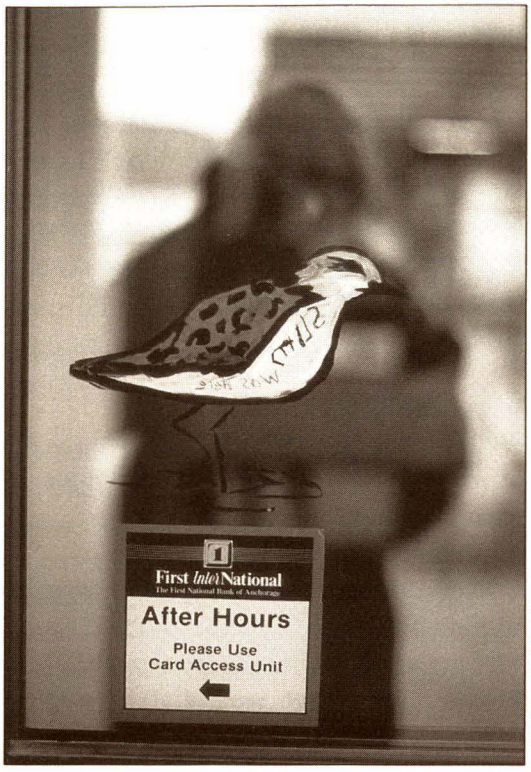
Autumn in northern Michigan means a colorburst of leaves and the return of the mighty salmon. Thousands of chinook and coho salmon leave Lake Michigan and run up the rivers that drain the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Weighing 20 pounds or more, these fish are easy to see as they stage up on spawning beds in the clear waters of the Au Sable, Manistee, Big Sable, Pere Marquette, White, and Muskegon rivers. High banks are prime vantage points for watching groups of these mythic fish stir the spawning riffles. Visitors can take one of the tours offered at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources spawn-taking facility on the Little Manistee River.

Alaska Region

Steep Creek Fish Viewing Camera, Tongass National Forest

Fishwatching often takes some ingenuity for us terrestrial folks. At the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, tens of thousands of visitors witness a creek teeming with sockeye salmon that spawn from July until December. Yet, the passage of large numbers of people causes bank erosion and fish harassment. Matt Stastney, an enterprising Eagle Scout candidate, solved the problem with an underwater viewing camera system. Now, visitors can watch the fish underwater, live, on a TV monitor inside a viewing shelter. The shelter is the takeoff point for guided salmon walks. Matt enlisted help from the Boy Scouts of America, the Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Price/Costco, Alaska Cable Network, Sno-Free Video, Don Able's Building Supply, Perseverance Glass, and Princess Tours. The result is community pride in their "fish-cam" and, most of all, in the wild salmon.





Deborah Richie

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival in Cordova, Alaska, united an entire community in "watching."

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, Chugach National Forest

You won't find any roads leading to the town of Cordova on Prince William Sound. That doesn't stop an influx of birders each May from partaking in the greatest gathering of shorebirds in the western hemisphere. Sandpipers by the millions wheel in from the sky to stock up on mudflat delicacies of the delta before heading on to their far north breeding grounds. Birders come by plane or boat. The week-long community festival features speakers, children's workshops, live bird demonstrations, food fairs, and shorebird sketches on every shop window. The festival promotes conservation of the delta while infusing more than $47,000 into a town of 3,000. It took a flock of cooperators to get the first festival off the ground in 1990, and they have never looked back.

Pack Creek Bear Fee Demonstration Program, Tongass National Forest

People are happy to pay a fee to view brown bears at Pack Creek, as long as the money goes back to the site itself. Results of a focus group encouraged managers of the longtime bear-viewing area to go ahead with an experimental pay-to-view program. The Pack Creek NatureWatch site comprises a portion of Admiralty Island National Monument, the Chatham Area of the Tongass National Forest, and the Stan Price Wildlife Sanctuary. As funding sources for managing the popular viewing area dwindle from the Forest Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the fee offers hope for protecting the bears and for a once-in-a-lifetime wilderness viewing experience. A 1-mile trail leads to a 14-foot-tall observation tower designed for safely viewing bears. During the peak season, coinciding with two salmon runs (July 10–August 25), visitors are limited to 24 per day. The fee to be phased in from 1997 to 1999 is $36 per day for the peak season and $20 per day for the shoulder season (June 1–July 9 and August 26–September 10), with discounts for seniors and children.

The Future of NatureWatch

The Opportunity

Consider that the national forests are the largest outdoor classroom in the country. People are racing to our forests in record numbers to learn more about the nature of America. Put the two together, and there is an amazing opportunity for education that sticks. Who can forget, for example, the message that an osprey depends on healthy rivers and fish when witnessing the sleek bird plummet from the sky, strike the water, and emerge with a fish grasped in its talons? To protect and restore the health of the land takes people's understanding, caring, and commitment. For "collaborative stewardship" to succeed, we need NatureWatch to help Americans enlarge the care we have for our own backyards on up to our entire National Forest System.

The Challenge

We have taken long strides in advancing NatureWatch to keep pace with public enthusiasm. We have successfully pulled together fish, wildlife, and plant viewing into a single, unified program. We have doubled our viewing sites, from 400 to more than 800 in 3 years. Yet, we are also living in

Rich Wyman

Robert Frost Trail, Green Mountain National Forest provides access for getting up close.

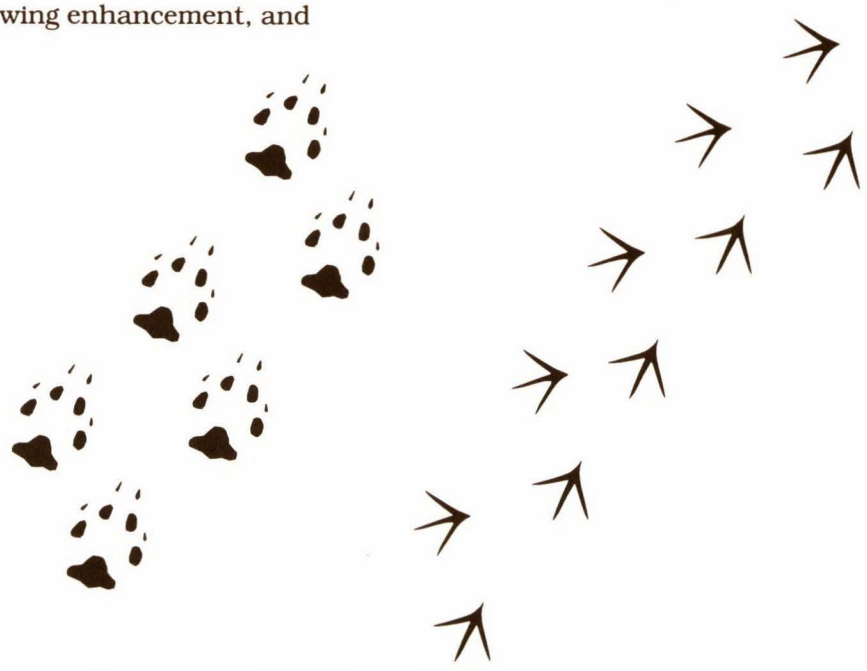
an era of doing more with less, cutting costs, and justifying programs as essential, rather than nice to do. How can we support NatureWatch as a vital arm of Forest Service conservation, recreation, and education outreach? How best can we integrate NatureWatch into every forest program? How can we ensure responsible viewing ethics while expanding opportunities for people to get close to nature?

Choosing a Track to Follow

Partnerships are the backbone of NatureWatch, and we foresee many more varied partners coming on board. The beauty of the program is that the credit belongs to everyone involved. The new national NatureWatch brochure features 17 partner logos. From the Center for Plant Conservation to Ducks Unlimited, from Kodak to The Endangered Species Store, each partner is strongly committed to the NatureWatch vision. We anticipate partners chipping in for education projects, viewing enhancement, and even for staffing. We know from experience that national forests with NatureWatch specialists build terrific programs. In Idaho and Washington, those positions are possible because of multiple partner support.

The vitality of NatureWatch ties to perpetuating the economic vitality of our communities. We will be marketing our success stories of events like the Wenatchee Salmon Festival, demonstrating the economic worth of NatureWatch, and providing the sparks and incentives for NatureWatch festivals, tours, and infrastructure in every State.

The final word on NatureWatch is to not lose sight of what we are watching. We never want to "market" nature. Instead, we seek to share the wonder of our wild animals, plants, and fish with people from all walks of life. In doing so, we hope to pass our wild legacy safely into the hands of future generations.



To find out how to get involved, contact:

Kimberly Anderson

National NatureWatch Coordinator

USDA Forest Service

P.O. Box 25127

Lakewood, CO 80225

303-275-5064

or contact your local Forest Service Office

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Rocky Mountain columbine. *Photo by Audrey Nes Kuykendall*

Black-crowned night heron. *Photo by Lee D. Salber, Ducks Unlimited*

Cucumbers offer a perfect opportunity to learn how to remove hooks in catch and release fishing. *Photo by Ellie Jones*

Fish printing in Cordova, Alaska. *Photo by Sandy Frost*

Creatures of the night—building bat houses. *Photo by Kimberly Anderson*

This publication was compiled, revised, and edited by Deborah Richie Communications, Missoula, MT.

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BAT FRIENDS